

VZCZCXRO7706
PP RUEHMA RUEHPA
DE RUEHRY #1109 2780858
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 050858Z OCT 07
FM AMEMBASSY CONAKRY
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1719
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS CONAKRY 001109

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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [ECON](#) [ENRG](#) [PGOV](#) [GV](#)
SUBJECT: WORD FROM THE STREET - ELECTRICITY SUPPLY IS BETTER
REF: CONAKRY 1083

¶1. SUMMARY. Interviews with street vendors and merchants throughout the capital city revealed that the availability of electrical power has significantly improved in recent weeks despite several unauthorized demonstrations protesting lack of public utilities. Many citizens attribute the improvements to Prime Minister Lansana Kouyate,s government.
END SUMMARY.

¶2. Embassy staff informally polled residents of twelve districts in Conakry on October 1 in order to ascertain citizens, general impressions of the availability of electricity and water. Visited neighborhoods include areas where there has been heightened civil unrest and a number of unauthorized street demonstrations over the last month.

WE HAVE MORE POWER) MOST OF US ANYWAY

¶3. Based on interviewees, comments, there seems to be a general consensus that the city,s electrical supply has significantly improved in recent weeks. Uninterrupted power is reportedly available in some neighborhoods although there are still instances of brief outages. In other areas, merchants reported that while they have seen a significant improvement, power cuts remain frequent. Several merchants expressed appreciation toward the government for the improved situation saying that they have seen increases in sales, customer satisfaction and profits. Others commented that they would consider new investments if the trend continues.

¶4. However, in Hamdallaye, home to most of the recent unauthorized demonstrations, the electrical transformer is broken and the district has been without power for a few weeks. A furniture merchant commented on the Ministry of Interior,s recent announcement of its intent to enforce legal prohibitions of unauthorized demonstrations (reftel) saying that &something needs to be done to address these problems.8 He added that law and order is necessary and that continued demonstrations and/or civil unrest is bad for business.

¶5. Some merchants expressed skepticism as to whether the government can maintain the improved power supply, noting that with the end of the rainy season and the onslaught of summer heat, it will be difficult for equipment to operate without breakdowns. While citizens have observed some improvements, others remain dissatisfied and are demanding that the government do more to address the problem.

BUT NO WATER

¶6. With respect to water, merchants generally agreed that the supply is inadequate and that there has been little to no visible improvement. Most of the visited neighborhoods have

access to water once every 72 hours. In another district, water is available only once a week. Some people in these neighborhoods reportedly have to purchase bottled water in order to satisfy their needs.

THANKS TO KOUYATE

17. Many interviewees attributed the recent improvements to Prime Minister Lansana Kouyate,s government. However, a number of citizens commented that the government is not communicating its progress and should implement a public communications strategy in order to take credit for its successes.
CARTER